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FM REO BASRAH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0455

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SUBJECT: BADR CHIEF ON SECURITY AND RECONSTRUCTION

REF: BASRAH 65

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶11. (C) Summary: The Regional Coordinator (RC) and Deputy RC met with Badr Organization chief and Basrah Provincial Council member Hassan al-Rashid on September 11 to discuss the security environment and the current state of political affairs.

Al-Rashid spoke at length on his practical views of federalism (to be reported septel) and added that the security climate had not appreciably improved since the Prime Minister's Security Committee took over responsibility for the city. He maintained that the same Iraq Security Forces that were sworn to uphold the law are breaking it. He stressed that Basrah's reconstruction projects must continue and requested an update on the construction of the Basrah Children's Hospital. End summary.

SECURITY AND POLICE CHIEF

¶12. (C) In a September 11 meeting with the RC and DRC, Badr chief Hassan al-Rashid discussed the current state of political affairs. He said that the security situation had not improved, or "only a little" since PM Maliki's created a Security Committee, headed by Major General Ali Hammadi, to restore some semblance of security to Basrah. Al-Rashid added that the "security problems are caused by the local government" and that security forces, particularly the Serious Crimes Unit of the Iraqi police, are the major offenders. Pointing to the corruption within the police force and noting that tribal involvement is part of the problem, al-Rashid told the RC that he would support a military operation that would help stabilize the security situation within the city. When queried about the appointment of a permanent police chief for Basrah, al-Rashid said that no names had been submitted yet to the Ministry of Interior - the BPC is waiting for the de-Ba'athification Committee to review the names of potential candidates.

Confusion in the BPC and Elections

¶13. (C) Al-Rashid said that within the Basrah Provincial Council there is "a lot of confusion" and that members are clueless at times. He cited the Security Committee taking control and the lack of movement on reconstruction projects as example of the Council's bewilderment and lack of direction. (Note: al-Rashid was clearly frustrated with the Council's lack of vigor in presenting possible reconstruction projects.) He noted that he still believes provincial elections will be held at the end of this year or at the beginning of the next, but declined to discuss election strategy or the possibility of creating voting blocs because it is "too early."

Basrah Children's Hospital

¶4. (SBU) Al-Rashid asked the RC for an update on the construction of the Basrah Children's Hospital. Citing local stories of an interrupted construction and lack of funds, he pointed out that the hospital is very important to the people of Basrah. The RC gave al-Rashid general background on the current state of affairs of the construction and offered to have the Army Corps of Engineers project representative brief him.

¶5. (C) Comment: As usual, Hassan al-Rashid provided thoughtful responses to the many questions asked him, even if the answers were not as illuminating as desired. He leads the Badr/SCIRI parties in Basrah and is a good contact of the REO. (See reftel.) His comments about the ineptitude of the Basrah Provincial Council are spot on and are an example of his frustration over the dilly-dallying that is characteristic of the Council. Hassan al-Rashid remains the most professional of the politicians in Basrah. End Comment.

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